The Cheerful Letter

EVERY PLACE A CHURCH; EVERY DAY THE LORD'S DAY; ALL EVENTS BLESSINGS; ALL JOY THANKSGIVING; AND ALL NATURE AND LIFE FULL OF GOD.—*James Freeman Clarke.*

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THE CHEERFUL LETTER.

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EACH AND ALL.

Little thinks, in the field, yon red-cloaked clown
Of thee from the hill-top looking down;
The heifer that lows in the upland farm,
Far-heard, lows not thine ear to charm;
The sexton, tolling his bell at noon,
Deems not that great Napoleon
Stops his horse, and lists with delight,
Whilst his files sweep round yon Alpine height;
Nor knowest thou what argument
Thy life to thy neighbor's creed has lent.
All are needed by each one;
Nothing is fair or good alone.

I thought the sparrow's note from heaven,
Singing at dawn on the alder bough;
I brought him home, in his nest, at even;
He sings the song, but it cheers not now,
For I did not bring home the river and sky;—
He sang to my ear,—they sang to my eye.

The delicate shells lay on the shore;
The bubbles of the latest wave
Fresh pearls to their enamel gave;
And the bellowing of the savage sea
Greeted their safe escape to me.
I wiped away the weeds and foam,
I fetched my sea-born treasures home;
But the poor, unsightly, noisome things
Had left their beauty on the shore,
With the sun, and the sand, and the wild uproar.

The lover watched his graceful maid,
As 'mid the virgin train she strayed,
Nor knew her beauty's best attire
Was woven still by the snow-white choir.
At last she came to his hermitage,
Like the bird from the woodlands to the cage;
The gay enchantment was undone,
A gentle wife, but fairy none.

Then I said, "I covet truth;
Beauty is unripe childhood's cheat;
I leave it behind with the games of youth."—
As I spoke, beneath my feet
The ground-pine curled its pretty wreath,
Running over the club-moss burrs;
I inhaled the violet's breath;
Around me stood the oaks and firs;
Pine-cones and acorns lay on the ground;
Over me soared the eternal sky,
Full of light and of deity;
Again I saw, again I heard,
The rolling river, the morning bird;—
Beauty through my senses stole;
I yielded myself to the perfect whole.

—*Ralph Waldo Emerson, in the Western Messenger*, 1839.

RALPH WALDO EMERSON.

A Discourse delivered to the Church of the Disciples, Boston, by James Freeman Clarke, May 7, 1882.

"*If thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light.*"—MATT. vi. 23.

It is natural and fit that many pulpits to-day should take for their theme the character and influence of the great thinker and poet who has just left us; for every such soul is a new revelation of God's truth and love. Each opens the gateway between our lower world of earthly care and earthly pleasure into a higher heavenly world of spirit. They lift our lives to a higher plane, and convince us that we also belong to God, to eternity, to heaven. And few in our day have been such mediators of heavenly things to mankind as Ralph Waldo Emerson.

Last Sunday afternoon, when the town of Concord, small but historic, was mourning through all its streets for the loss of its be-

loved and revered citizen, when the smallest cottage had on its door the badge of sorrow, when great numbers came from abroad to testify their affection and respect, that which impressed me the most was the inevitable response of the human heart to whatever is true and good. Cynics may tell us that men are duped by charlatans, led by selfish demagogues, incapable of knowing honor and truth when set before them; that they always stone their prophets and crucify their saviors; that they have eyes and do not see, ears and never hear. This is true for a time; but inevitably, by a law as sure as that which governs the movements of the planets, the souls of men turn at last toward what is true, generous, and noble. The prophets and teachers of the race may be stoned by one generation, but their monuments are raised by the next. They are misunderstood and misrepresented to-day, but to-morrow they become the accredited leaders of their time. Jesus, who knew well that he would be rejected and murdered by a people blind and deaf to his truth, knew also that this truth would sooner or later break down all opposition, and make him master and king of the world. "I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me."

Last Sunday afternoon, as the grateful procession followed the teacher to his grave in the Concord cemetery, the harshness of our spring seemed to relent; and Nature became tender toward him who had loved her so well. I thought of his words: "The visible heavens and earth sympathized with Jesus." The town where "the embattled farmers stood," where the musket was discharged which opened the War of the Revolution,—the gun of which Lafayette said, "It was the alarm-gun of the world,"—the town of Hawthorne's "Old Manse" and of his grave, now that Emerson also sleeps in its quiet valley, has received an added glory. It has become one of the "Meccas of the mind."

Let me describe the mental and spiritual condition of New England when Emerson appeared. Calvinism, with its rigorous dogmatism, was slowly dying, and had been succeeded by a calm and somewhat formal rationalism. Locke was still the master in the realm of thought; Addison and Blair, in literary expression. In poetry the school of Pope was engaged in conflict with that of Byron and his contemporaries. Wordsworth had led the way to a deeper view of nature; but Wordsworth could scarcely be called a popular writer. In theology a certain literalism prevailed, and the doctrines of Christianity were inferred from counting and weighing texts on either side. Not the higher reason, with its intuition of eternal ideas, but the analytic understanding, with its logical methods, was considered to be the ruler in the world of thought. There was more of culture than of intellectual life, more of good habits than of moral enthusiasm. Religion had become very much of an external institution. Christianity consisted in holding rational or orthodox opinions, going regularly to church, and listening every Sunday to a certain number of prayers, hymns, and sermons. These sermons, with some striking exceptions, were rather tame and mechanical. In Boston, it is true, Buckminster had appeared,—that soul of flame which soon wore to decay its weak body. The consummate orator, Edward Everett, had followed him in Brattle Square pulpit. Above all, Channing had looked, with a new spiritual insight, into the truths of religion and morality. But still the mechanical treatment prevailed in a majority of the churches of New England, and was considered, on the whole, to be the wisest and safest method. There was an unwritten creed of morals, literature, and social thought to which all were expected to conform. There was little originality and much repetition. On all subjects there were certain formulas which it was considered proper to repeat. "Thou art a blessed fellow," says one of Shakespeare's characters, "to think as other people think. Not a man's thought in the world keeps the roadway better than thine." The thought of New England kept the roadway. Of course at all times a large part of the belief of the community is derived from memory, custom, and imitation; but in those days, if I remember them aright, it was regarded as a kind of duty to think as every one else thought, a sort of delinquency, or weakness, to differ from the majority.

If the movements of thought are now much more independent and spontaneous; if to-day traditions have lost their despotic power; if even those who hold an orthodox creed are able to treat it as a dead letter, respectable for its past uses, but by no means binding us now,—this is largely owing to the manly position taken by Emerson. And yet, let it be observed, this influence was not exercised by attacking old opin-

ions, by argument, by denial, by criticism. Theodore Parker did all this, but his influence on thought has been far less than that of Emerson. Parker was a hero who snuffed the battle afar off, and flung himself, sword in hand, into the thick of the conflict. But, much as we love and reverence his honesty, his immense activity, his devotion to truth and right, we must admit to-day, standing by these two friendly graves, that the power of Emerson to soften the rigidity of time-hardened belief was far the greater. It is the old fable of the storm and sun. The violent attacks of the tempest only made the traveller cling more closely to his cloak The genial heat of the sun compelled him to throw it aside. In all Mr. Emerson's writings there is scarcely any argument. He attacks no man's belief. He simply states his own. His method is always positive, constructive. He opens the windows, and lets in more light. He is no man's opponent, the enemy of no one. He states what he sees, and that which he does not see he passes by. He was often attacked, but never replied. His answer was to go forward, and say something else. He did not care for what he called the "bugbear consistency." If to-day he said what seemed like Pantheism, and to-morrow he saw some truth which seemed to reveal a divine personality, a supreme will, he uttered the last, as he had declared the first, always faithful to the light within. He left it to the spirit of truth to reconcile such apparent contradictions. He was like his own humblebee,—

> "Seeing only what is fair,
> Sipping only what is sweet,
> Thou dost mock at fate and care,
> Leave the chaff, and take the wheat."

He describes his humblebee as always on the search for fair and honey-producing flowers:—

> "Violets and bilberry bells,
> Maple-sap, and daffodils,
> Columbine with horn of honey,
> Scented fern, and agrimony. . . .
> All beside was unknown waste,
> All was picture as he passed."

By this method of positive statement he not only saved the time usually wasted in argument, attack, reply, rejoinder, but he gave us the substance of truth instead of its form. Logic and metaphysic reveal no truths. They merely arrange in order what the higher faculties of the mind have made known. Hence the speedy oblivion which descends on polemics of all sorts. The great theological debaters, where are they? The books of Horsley and McGee are buried in the same grave with those of Belsham and Priestley, their old opponents. The bitter attacks on Christianity by Voltaire and Paine are inurned in the same dark and forgotten vaults with the equally bitter defences of Christianity by its numerous champions. Argument may often be necessary; but no truth is slain by argument, no error can be kept alive by it. Emerson is an eminent example of a man who never replied to attacks, but went on his way, and saw at last all opposition hushed, all hostility at an end. He devoted his powers to giving to his readers his insights, knowing that these alone feed the soul. Thus men came to him to be fed. His sheep heard his voice. Those who felt themselves better for his instruction followed him. He collected around him thus an ever-increasing band of disciples, until in England, in Germany, in all lands where men read and think, he is looked up to as a master. Many of these disciples were persons of rare gifts and powers, like Margaret Fuller, Theodore Parker, George Ripley, Hawthorne. Many others were unknown to fame, yet deeply sensible of the blessings they had received from their prophet and seer of the nineteenth century. For this was his office. He was a man who saw. He had the vision and the faculty divine. He sat near the fountain-head, and tasted the waters of Helicon in their source.

His first little book, a duodecimo of less than a hundred pages, called "Nature," published in 1836, indicates all these qualities. It begins thus:—

"Our age is retrospective. It builds the sepulchres of the fathers. It writes biographies, histories, criticisms. The foregoing generations beheld God and Nature face to face; we, through their eyes. Why should not we also enjoy an original relation to the universe? Why should not we have a poetry and philosophy of insight, and not of tradition, and a religion by revelation to us, and not the history of theirs? . . . The sun shines to-day also. . . .Undoubtedly we have no questions to ask which are unanswerable."

This was his first doctrine, that of self-reliance. He taught that God had given to every man the power to see with his own eyes, think with his own mind, believe what

seemed to him true, plant himself on his instincts, and, as he says, "call a pop-gun a pop-gun, though the ancient and honorable of the earth declare it to be the crack of doom." This was manly and wholesome doctrine. It might, no doubt, be abused, and lead some persons to think they were men of original genius, when they were only eccentric. It may have led others to attack all institutions and traditions, as though, if a thing were old, it was necessarily false. But Emerson himself was the best antidote to such extravagance. To a youth, who brought to him a manuscript confuting Plato, he replied, "When you attack the king, you ought to be sure to kill him." But his protest against the prevailing conventionalism was healthy, and his call on all "to be themselves" was inspiring.

The same doctrine is taught in the introductory remarks of the editors of the *Dial*. They say they have "obeyed with joy the strong current of thought which has led many sincere persons to reprobate that rigor of conventions which is turning us to stone, which renounces hope and only looks backward, which suspects improvement and holds nothing so much in horror as the dreams of youth." This work, the *Dial*, made a great impression, out of all proportion to its small circulation. By the elders it was cordially declared to be unintelligible mysticism; and so, no doubt, much of it was. Those inside, its own friends, often made as much fun of it as those outside. Yet it opened the door for many new and noble thoughts, and was a wild bugle-note, a reveille, calling on all generous hearts to look toward the coming day.

Thus the first great lesson taught by Mr. Emerson was "self-reliance." And the second was like it, though apparently opposed to it, "God-reliance." Not really opposed to it, for it meant this: God is also near to your mind and heart, as he was to the mind and heart of the prophets and inspired men of the past. God is ready to inspire you also, if you will trust in him. In the little book called "Nature" he says:—

"The highest is present to the soul of man; the dread universal essence, which is not wisdom, or love, or power, or beauty, but all in one, and each entirely, is that for which all things exist, and by which they are. Believe that throughout nature spirit is present; that it is one, that it does not act upon us from without, but through ourselves. . . . As a plant on the earth, so man rests on the bosom of God, nourished by unfailing fountains, and drawing at his need inexhaustible power."

And so in his poem called "The Problem" he teaches that all religions are from God; that all the prophets and sibyls and lofty souls that have sung psalms, written scripture, and built the temples and cathedrals of men, were inspired by a spirit above their own. He puts aside the shallow explanation that any of the great religions ever came from priestcraft:—

"Out from the heart of nature rolled
The burdens of the Bible old;
The litanies of nations came,
Like the volcano's tongue of flame,
Up from the burning core below,—
The canticles of love and woe.

"The word unto the prophet spoken
Was writ on tables yet unbroken;
The word by seers or sibyls told
In groves of oak or fanes of gold,
Still floats upon the morning wind,
Still whispers to the willing mind.
One accent of the Holy Ghost
The heedless world hath never lost."

In all that Emerson says of nature he is equally devout. He sees God in it all. It is to him full of a divine charm. "In the woods," he says, "is perpetual youth. Within these plantations of God a decorum and sanctity reigns, and we return to reason and faith." "The currents of the Universal Being circulate through me. I am part and particle of God." For saying such things as these he was accused of Pantheism. And he was a pantheist, yet only as Paul was pantheist when he said, "In Him we live and move and have our being; from whom and through whom are all things; the fulness of him who filleth all in all." Emerson was, in his view of nature, at one with Wordsworth, who said:—

"The clouds were touched,
And in their silent faces he could read
Unutterable love. Sensation, soul and form
All melted into him; they swallowed up
His animal being; in them did he live,
And by them did he live; they were his life.
In such high hour
Of visitation from the living God,
Thought was not; in enjoyment it expired."

Emerson has thus been to our day the prophet of God in the soul, in nature, in life. He has stood for spirit against matter. Darwin, his great peer, the serene master in the school of science, was like him in this,—that

he also said what he saw and no more. He also taught what God showed to him in the outward world of sense, as Emerson what God showed in the inward world of spirit. Amid the stormy disputes of their time, each of these men went his own way, their eye single and their whole body full of light. The work of Darwin was the easier, for he floated with the current of the time, which sets at present so strongly toward the study of things seen and temporal. But the work of Emerson was more noble, for he stands for things unseen and eternal, for a larger religion, a higher faith, a nobler worship. This strong and tender soul has done its work and gone on its way. But he will always fill a niche of the universal church as a New England prophet. He had the purity of the New England air in his moral nature, a touch of the shrewd Yankee wit in his speech, and the long inheritance of ancestral faith incarnate and consolidated in blood and brain. But to this were added qualities which were derived from some far-off realm of human life,—an Oriental cast of thought, a touch of mediæval mysticism, and a vocabulary brought from books unknown to our New England literature. No commonplaces of language are to be found in his writings, and, though he had read the older writers, he does not imitate them. He, also, like his humblebee, has gathered contributions from remotest fields, and enriched our language with a new and picturesque speech all his own.

Let us, then, be grateful for this best of God's gifts,—another soul sent to us filled with divine light. Thus we learn anew how full nature and life are of God.

> "Ever fresh the broad creation,
> A divine improvisation,
> From the heart of God proceeds,—
> A single will, a million deeds."

One word concerning Mr. Emerson's relation to Christ and to Christianity. The distinction which he made between Jesus and other teachers was, no doubt, one of degree, and not one of kind. He put no great gulf of supernatural powers, origin, or office between Christ and the ethnic prophets. But his reverence for Jesus was profound and tender. Nor did he object to the word "Christian" or to the Christian Church. In recent years, at least, he not unfrequently attended the services of the Unitarian church in his town, and I have met him at Unitarian conventions, a benign and revered presence.

In the cemetery at Bonn, on the Rhine, is the tomb of Niebuhr, the historian, a man of somewhat like type, as I judge, to our Emerson. At least, some texts on his monument would be admirably appropriate for any stone which may be placed over the remains of the American prophet and poet in the sweet valley of tombs in Concord.

One of these texts was from Sirach lxvii. 14, 17:—

> How wise wast thou in thy youth, and as a flood filled with understanding!
> Thy soul covered the whole earth, and thou filledst it with dark parables.
> Thy name went far unto the islands, and for thy peace thou wast beloved.
> The countries marvelled at thee for thy songs and proverbs and parables and interpretations.

THE STILL HOUR.

FORBEARANCE.

Hast thou named all the birds without a gun?
Loved the wood-rose, and left it on its stalk?
At rich men's tables eaten bread and pulse?
Unarmed, faced danger with a heart of trust?
And loved so well a high behavior,
In man or maid, that thou from speech refrained,
Nobility more nobly to repay?
Oh, be my friend, and teach me to be thine!

A believing love will relieve us of a vast load of care. O my brothers, God exists. We need only obey. There is guidance for each of us, and by lowly listening we shall hear the right word.

When he says, "I ought," when love warms him, when he chooses, warned from on high, the great and good deed, then deep melodies wander through his soul, from the supreme wisdom.

Let a man practise the minor virtues. How much of human life is lost in waiting! Let him not make his fellow-creatures wait. How many words and promises are promises of conversation! Let his be words of fate.

Life is not so short but that there is always time enough for courtesy.

To interpret Christ, it needs Christ in the heart. The teachings of the Spirit can be apprehended only by the same Spirit that gave them forth.

There is no beautifier of complexion or form or behavior like the wish to scatter joy, and not pain, around us.

In solitude and in the country, what dignity distinguishes the holy time! The old Sabbath or Seventh Day, white with the religions of unknown thousands of years, when this hallowed hour dawns out of the deep,—a clean page which the wise may inscribe with truth,—the cathedral music of history breathes through it a psalm to our solitude.

How dear, how soothing to man, arises the idea of God, peopling the lonely place, effacing the scars of our mistakes and disappointments!

It inspires in man an infallible trust. He is sure that his welfare is dear to the heart of being. He believes that he cannot escape from his good. The things that are really for thee, gravitate to thee. Oh, believe, as thou livest, that every sound that is spoken over the round world, which thou oughtest to hear, will vibrate on thine ear.

Emerson.

THE BOOK AND MAGAZINE CLUB.

[*Send all offers and requests for this department to Mrs. W. B. Nichols, 2 Kensington Park, Roxbury, Mass.*]

BEFORE WRITING TO ASK FOR BOOKS, DO NOT FAIL TO READ THE FOLLOWING DIRECTIONS.

1. If you see a book offered in the Book Club which you desire to read, write directly to the address of the person who offers it. If she receives more than one request, the addresses of those to whom she cannot respond may be sent to the Book Club, and the request printed there.

2. If you have a book or paper to give or lend, write directly to the Book Club as above, and offer it with your address.

3. In sending a book, enclose, when possible, a P.O. card for response, already addressed.

4. In thanking the person who has sent you a book, always mention the name of the book. Say, "I have received 'Black Beauty,'" or whatever the book may be; not, "I have received *that book*." This saves a busy person a good deal of time. Otherwise she must consult her list constantly to find out what book has been received safely.

N.B.—Do not send books to the Book Club. Send only the *offer* to the club. To send the *book* involves packing it *twice* and paying postage *twice*, where once would suffice.

Those who offer books frequently receive notes, saying, "Shall I return you this book, or keep it, or pass it on?" *Unless otherwise stated*, all books offered in this department are *given*, and the postage paid.

Please remember, when you see a request for a book in the Book Club, to write a card to Mrs. Nichols, asking, "*Shall* I send such a book to such a person?" before sending it: else the person who requests it may receive several copies. When any one writes directly to you, asking for a book offered by you, send a card to Mrs. Nichols, saying that you *have* sent it. When you receive more requests than you can meet, send these to the Book Club to be printed there.

Please write only on one side of the paper in sending lists or letters to the secretary.

OFFERS.

Will any mother who would like to have "Gentle Measures in Training the Young," by Jacob Abbott, or any one who would like "Black Beauty," address Miss Langmaid, 71 Newbury Street, Boston, Mass.?

REQUESTS.

[*Read directions at beginning of Book Club before writing.*]

Those who send offers and requests for the Book Club will do us a kindness by noting the following suggestions: 1. Please write very clearly. 2. Do not use a pencil. 3. Do not use contractions, especially names of States (as Cal. and Col. for California, Colorado). 4. Write on one side only of the paper. 5. Do not forget to give your full address. (The State is now and then omitted.) 6. Do not send matter for the Book Club to Miss Clarke, but to Mrs. Nichols, the Book Club secretary.

Those who write to us for the first time must send the name and address of a minister as a reference. Without that the request will not be printed.

1. Mrs. J. T. Wilmer, Buena Vista, Virginia, will be glad of Longfellow's or Whittier's poems or current magazines.

2. I would like to become a member of your club, and would be glad to get papers to read, or any kind of literature, as I have four children. They are very fond of reading, and I am not able to buy. Mrs. Aldia Wyatte, Vulcan, Virginia.

3. Mrs. Elizabeth Lohr, Rapidan, Virginia, asks for "Without a Home" and "From Jest to Earnest."

4. I come again asking for literature suitable for myself and children, ages twelve and thirteen. We have been shut in for some months, owing to the dreadful roads and the distance we are from church. I enjoy *The Cheerful Letter* sent me by a friend with whom I correspond. I am sure it is doing a great work. I would love very much to have several other correspondents. With best wishes. Lela C. Herndon, Indiantown, Orange County, Virginia.

5. I am a farmer's boy, fourteen years of age. It is twelve miles to my nearest depot, and nineteen miles to my next nearest. I would be very glad if some one would send me "American History," by Sheldon; "History of Greece," Oman; and *Harper's Magazine*. Marvin Stewart, Reuben, North Carolina.

6. I am a widow and an invalid. I have been sick for over four years, and been in bed a good part of the time, but for the last few months have been so that I can read and do some light work. I would like to join your circle in name. I hope I already belong in spirit.

Since the beginning of my illness I have lost my husband and two daughters, and also my home by fire, with part of my household furniture. I own a little farm, and, by using economy, myself and only daughter have the necessities and many of the comforts of this life, but are not able to buy books, papers, or other superfluous articles. I try to do what little I can for the needy ones around me. (Mrs.) Jennie I. Satterfield, Mt. Airy, Surry County, North Carolina.

7. I am a young housekeeper, have not been married long, and, as I am alone a great deal, have lots of time to read, but am not able to buy books. Would be so glad to receive any reading you can send me. It will be highly appreciated and enjoyed. Mrs. A. P. Billingsley, King George Court-house, Virginia.

8. Mrs. Isabelle Nichols, Wharf, North Carolina, will be pleased to receive any reading.

9. Miss Maud Dawes, Beaver, Wyoming, asks for *St. Nicholas*, April number especially, also the *Arena*, for use in her school.

10. Mrs. J. A. Pickerel, Verano, Virginia, will be glad of any reading.

11. The *Ladies' Home Journal* is asked for by Mrs. Jane Cohoon, Penn Yan, New York.

12. Mrs. Jennie L. Pleasant, Experiment, Virginia, confined to the house by an invalid father and seven children, will be glad of reading.

13. I hardly know what I should do without the Cheerful Letter Exchange Society. It has given so much help and pleasure to my pupils and other friends, as well as to me. I so much wish some of the best of the newer books. I mention some for which I am particularly anxious. Of course, I do not expect to receive them all, but I shall be grateful for any that are sent me. We are so far away from any town privileges in the way of literature and music, and the reviews of the new books sound so tempting. I shall also be very glad of any piano music, classic, standard, or popular; "L'Aiglon," "History of Sir George Calmady," "Richard Yea and Nay," "The Day's Work," "Soldiers Three," "Under the Deodars," "In Connection with the De Willoughby Claim." Miss Annie L. Phillips, Pleasant View, Amherst County, Virginia.

14. Mrs. Annie Guthrie, Siboney, Oklahoma, asks for reading. She lives in a new country where reading is very scarce.

15. Mrs. Ida Burrows, Saint Jo, Texas, will be glad of any reading.

16. I am one of the "shut-ins" by sad afflictions. I am not able to take active exercise, but I love to read. I hear of the great kindness of your exchange. Will you please let my little boy, nine years old, and me share with a large number of others in the blessing? We would be so thankful of any reading matter, and pass it on, if desired. Rev. G. Ray, Amherst, Virginia, is our minister. Mrs. N. V. Davis, Pearch, Virginia.

17. Mr. W. J. Ross, Concord, North Carolina, asks for reading for himself and a seven-year-old girl.

18. I hope the Cheerful Letter friends will not forget me, as we are altogether among strangers, and would be prouder of reading and correspondence than ever before. There are many families of poor people here. I will pass the reading I get on to them. I will be thankful for any reading that may be sent me. (Miss) Helen Brammer, Glade Hill, Virginia.

19. We have a large family of children, and all fond of reading. Would be very glad to receive "Hearts Courageous," also any of E. P. Roe's works or L. M. Alcott's, or any good reading. Miss Jenny Billingsley, Lignum, Culpeper County, Virginia, would be glad of any good reading. She is sick and nervous, and would rather have some light reading; but anything would be highly appreciated, as she is the last of a large family of children at home with an

aged father. She has a lonely life and lots of time to read. Mrs. R. C. Duvall, Locust Grove, Virginia.

20. I am a reader of *The Cheerful Letter*, and enjoy it very much. I would like some good papers, such as *Youth's Companion, Saturday Post,* or the *Ladies' Home Journal.* We have formed a "Mothers' Club" here, in connection with the school, to have the parents co-operate with the teachers for getting the best results from the child. Any books and papers containing items of interest would be acceptable and received with thanks. Mrs. Alice Walt, 240 Oliver Avenue, San Diego, California.

(Have you asked for "Gentle Measures"?)

21. Mrs. J. B. Kline, 823 Kansas Avenue, Topeka, Kansas, asks for the following: "Chats with Music Students," by Thomas Tapper; "Little Journeys to the Homes of Great Musicians"; the *Looker-on Magazine.*

22. *Kind Friends,*—Will you please send me some reading? I am alone so much and would be so thankful, as I am too feeble to go to church. I would like any second-hand matter. I did get so much, but have no settled home, and change my post-office so often that I don't get much. But I am now in Springfield, and will be all summer, and as long as I live; but, if any change is, I will let you know. I like Sabbath reading and "The Open Window," or anything you may have. I do so truly thank you, kind friends. S. M. Kiger, 121 N. 4th Street, Springfield, Illinois.

THE MOTHERS' COUNCIL.

AN OLD MAID'S OBSERVATIONS.

(*Concluded.*)

I would certainly make obedience as easy and pleasant to a child as possible, especially while he is in the plastic stage, when the slightest incident may give a bias to his character which will last as long as he lives. To give commands which we know will be irksome to a child, or to forbid what is harmless in itself, is only to suggest obstinacy. Let us remember that every mental impression is a part of the child's education, and that education is not putting something into the mind, but drawing something out of it. The worst of the old severe methods was that they aimed only at repressing the evil in a child, and not at developing the good.

All of my mother's children showed a disinclination for work. She never overworked us, but rather made a mistake in doing too much herself. It seemed natural that the main part of the work should fall upon her; but what she could not see was that she developed aversion to work by speaking of it as something that we would naturally dislike, but must be forced to do. As soon as we were able to work at all, she gave us some light task.

"Now it is time that you learned to work. It must be your work to dust the chairs (or to pick up three pans of chips), and you must do it *every* day." Was not that enough in itself to suggest to a child that it was very unpleasant to dust chairs and pick up chips? We usually waited to be told, and she would call us in from play. "Mary, come in at once, and dust the chairs. Didn't I tell you that you must do it every day?" It is always hard for a child to leave a play that it has got completely absorbed in, and we would do it with reluctance. Then she would say despairingly, "Oh, Mary is lazy!" and talk to us about the sin of laziness, tell us of other children who had to work so much harder than we, "for their mother puts a great deal more on them than I do on you," tell us how hard she had to work when she was a child, and wind up with, "If you won't work, you shan't eat: he that will not work, neither shall he eat."

I do not remember that I ever disliked work in itself, but it was associated in my mind with sharp words, forced obedience, and dirt, which I did and do hate.

One of my mother's best methods was that, when she did not wish us to do a thing, she would say, "You do not wish to do that, do you?" Why did she never think to say: "You wish to learn to work nicely, don't you? You would not grow up without knowing how to keep house?" It is a thankless task to tell of the mistakes of one of the most affectionate and best of mothers; but she saw many of them when it was too late, and would, I know, be glad to have other mothers profit by them. She often said, "We have to bring up one family to learn how to bring up another."

When I was eight years old, I began to wash dishes,—that work which, in families where no servant is kept, is usually left to the children. I always got very wet and dirty doing it, so I must put on not only the worse, but the dirtiest frock and apron that I had. It was years before I found out that

it was the most important of all household duties, and ought to be the cleanest. If I had been taught to wash my hands and put on a *clean* apron before doing it, and to stand so that the water would not touch my clothes, I believe I should have delighted in it. Picking up chips, too, ought to be made a pleasure. Suppose the mother, or, if she is too busy, an older brother or sister says: "Come, let's all go out and pick up chips. See who can fill his pan or basket quickest." Suppose the smallest basket is given to the youngest child, and is filled first. It is carried to mother in triumph. She says, "That is my little man, my Charlie loves to work." The development has already begun of a love of work, the foundation is laid of a manly industry. Few young children like to keep at one thing long, and I would be very careful at first not to make such tasks irksome, but to increase them gradually, almost imperceptibly, as the strength increases. If the child really is "born lazy," the fault was probably in some of its ancestors, if not in the mother herself; for a mother who works hard only because she is forced to is really a slave, and not a free agent: the child should not be reproached for it. But there is all the more need to cultivate industry, which, in its highest form, includes love of work.

I know a family of children who are always planning some surprise for mother. Sometimes they bring to the door a handcart full of dry wood which they have picked up in the grove. Sometimes they clear up a cellar or a shed in which disorder has accumulated while they were at school. Sometimes they bring her a string of fish or a basket of wild berries. These offerings are always appreciated, and the children thanked warmly; but no surprise is expressed that they should think of doing them. It is so well understood in that family that it is a privilege to help mother.

"My children are not like that," says a mother. "I have waited for days to see if any one else would clean up the shed, and *had to do it myself.*" Had she ever tried to make work a pleasure to her children? Perhaps, if she had expressed a wish that somebody would clean it up, the children would have done it voluntarily.

Most children scatter their toys: few like to pick them up again. It seems natural for mothers to put them away after the children are in bed, and it may be the easiest way for her to do; but it is better for the children to do it themselves. This can be managed in two ways. The mother may say sharply: "Now you've got to pick up every one of those toys before you shall have a mouthful of supper. Mary, pick up those cards. I'll put them in the fire if I find them on the floor again. Alice, pick up your doll. I won't have it on the floor. Harry, pick up your blocks, and put them in the box, and put it in the closet. There's your drawing slate on the floor. It's a wonder some of you did not step on it, and break it. Now, Mary, knock over the towel rack! You want to burn all of baby's clothes, don't you?" The children, if trained to obedience, will doubtless do as they are told, but at what a cost! They have received the impression that it is a most unpleasant thing to put away articles that they are through using. Indeed, if they have vivid memories, as many children have, it is quite possible that the work of clearing an untidy room will, in after years, always revive the memory of that scolding, and bring with it a feeling of resentment against the mother. We would not say quite all that we do to the little ones if we realized that some careless word said to them now may sink into the memory, and be a torture to them as long as they live.

Suppose the mother had said pleasantly: "Oh! we must clear up the nursery before papa comes. Papa likes to rest in the nursery, and we'll have it neat and cheerful for him. Come, let us put away the toys. Harry, you may put away the blocks in the box: see how nicely you can do it. Mary, you put away the cards. That's right, baby: pick up the slate, so papa won't step on it. Alice, it's time for dolly to go to bed: you wouldn't let her sleep on the floor, would you? Now bring papa's dressing jacket and slippers. See how different the room looks, and how quickly we have done it! Many hands make light work, don't they?"

The children are interested. They consider it a privilege to help to make the room cheerful for papa, and think it an honor to have him for a guest in their own apartment. They enjoy a quiet hour, or, perhaps, a noisy hour, with their parents, and go to bed happy.

"Very easy and pleasant you would make obedience to your children," said a mother. "I let mine know that they've got to obey, whether they like it or not." Yes, I would have obedience associated in their minds, not with sharp words and punishment, but with love and happiness. I would have them feel that obedience is right and natural,

disobedience wrong and unnatural. Every mother can force obedience from a child if she wishes to. Every mother can gain the loving, willing obedience of her child by a little no, by a great deal of firmness, patience, and unfailing love and sympathy. Does any mother wish to have her child obey her from fear alone?

One of the most pathetic utterances I ever heard in my life was from a father and mother who had reared a large family of children by the forcing system, who said, when appealed to in regard to conduct of their grown-up children: "What can we do? They are not little children now, we can't whip them." Their children had outgrown whipping (and how soon they do outgrow it!); and they had no other resource. If they had governed by love, would not their slightest wish be law now? Or, better still, if their children had been taught to obey conscience and reason, they would now be the equals and companions of their parents, and no restraint would be necessary.

In Saxe Holm's best story, Draxy Miller says that she never said a word to her child in her life about *obeying her*. I think it is only in very rare cases, if in any, that obedience can be dispensed with; but I would certainly try to impress upon a child that I wished it to do what was right, and not merely to obey my arbitrary will. "Because I tell you to" is not a satisfactory reason, and the child feels that it is not. *Because it is right* should always be the ruling motive.

NATURAL HISTORY.

JUNE FLOWERS.

The white daisy that grows so abundantly along the roadside and in the meadows is in what is called the Composite family, and is related to the asters, thistle, and golden-rod.

If we examine the yellow centre with a microscope, we shall find it composed of perfect little flowers: the outer white petals are called ray flowers.

In different localities it is known by various names: some call it white weed, others ox-eyed daisy.

The daisy is not a native of this country, but was brought from the Old World by the early colonists.

Fleur-de-lis is in the Iris family, and is oftentimes called large Blue Flag. It is a very stately and beautiful flower, and makes a fine showing in the gardens late in May and early in June. There are several cultivated varieties, some pure white, others yellow, marked with a dark reddish-brown. Then there are the dwarf Iris that are used for borders. These bloom several weeks earlier.

But what about Nature's wild garden? What a display of wild Iris she causes to bloom in the meadows for the bees!

The flowers are so arranged that, if it were not for the aid of the bees, no seed would form, for the position of the stamens is such that the pollen could not easily reach the stigmas of the same flowers; but Nature has dressed the Iris family in gay colors, so as to attract the bees. Now watch Mr. and Mrs. Bee as they alight on the very convenient landing-place of the recurved sepals: watch him crawl carefully into the hidden sweets that have been stored up in there to tempt him to crawl in. He thrusts his head under the anthers' pollen boxes. After he has drunk the sweets of this flower, he flies away, carrying the pollen to another. Thus the flower is fertilized, and Nature has accomplished her purpose.

Mountain laurel, spoon-wood, or, as it is sometimes called, calico-bush, is found growing along river banks. It grows very abundantly in the East, and but very sparingly in the West.

In New England it is in full flower about the middle of June, in South Jersey the last of May. A certain noted botanist says of this flower: "The ingenious contrivance of these flowers to secure cross-fertilization is most interesting. The long filaments of the stamens are arched by each another being caught in a little pouch of the corolla. The disturbance caused by the sudden alighting of an insect on the blossom or the quick brush of a bee's wing dislodges the anthers from their niches, and the stamens spring upward with such violence that the pollen is jerked from its hiding-place in the pore of the anther-cell on to the body of the insect visitor, who straightway carries it off to another flower upon whose protruding stigma it is sure to be inadvertently deposited. In order to see the working of this for one's self, it is only necessary to pick a fresh blossom, and either brush the corolla quickly with one's finger or touch the stamens suddenly with a pin, when the anthers will be dislodged and the pollen be seen to fly."

The leaves of this species are called very poisonous if eaten by animals, and it is said

that the Indians used them for suicidal purposes. They are also credited with giving it the name spoon-wood, for the reason that they used the wood for making spoons and other utensils.

This plant is in the Heath family, and is related to the blueberry and huckleberry and the lovely trailing arbutus, also the wintergreen or checkerberry.

A NOTE FROM DR. HALE.

NATIVE PLANTS.

The same thing which I have said about the singing birds may be said about the native plants. A friend of mine met at the station in a small town in Middlesex County an Italian forager, who had with him his baskets crowded down with two thousand tufts of *Caltha palustris*, meadow cowslip, which he had collected on Sunday, and which he would sell on Monday in Winter Street and the neighborhood for 25 cents a bunch.

Now the selectmen of that town are not powerful enough to arrest such depredations. But the people of Boston are; and, if the authorities will get Mr. Donnelly to "bill" the streets near Winter Street with a placard to say: "Do not buy wild flowers in the street. You are destroying them," they will advance their purpose much more than they will by twenty public meetings on the subject.

I cannot go to my summer home in Rhode Island, in the end of April, without meeting great wagons full of Mayflowers which have been pulled up from the pastures around my house by ravagers who sell the flowers in Boston, Providence, and New York. The law of Rhode Island is not strong enough to prevent such destruction. I am afraid that the law of Massachusetts is not strong enough. But it will be prevented if you and I and others like us set our faces against the purchase of such flowers in the streets.

I said on Monday that I would as readily buy a kiss for half a dollar as buy a Mayflower on the streets. And I hold to that.

Edward E. Hale.

[Our boys and girls have become protectors of animals. We hope they will now become protectors of plants. Dr. Hale speaks of Boston especially, but the principle is the same everywhere. Those who really love flowers will admire and enjoy them in their homes and haunts without helping to exterminate them.] L. F. C.

THE AMUSEMENT COLUMN.

I.

A Proverb in Cipher.

Decipher the following wise saying, "Tell me where you think there's a chance for a boy like Will, for here there's nothing in a progressive business way."

II.

Queer Seeds and Flowers.

1. Plant a bird and a cavalry boot, and what will come up?
2. Plant some small stones, and what will come up?
3. Plant a young girl's head, and what will come up?
4. Plant a timepiece in the afternoon, and what will come up?
5. Plant a fierce animal and the queenly flower, and what will come up?
6. Plant some of the king's money, and what will come up?

III.

Riddle.

Once of an animal I formed a part,
Yet in that life had neither head nor heart;
But, dead, I'm cured, by man I am made whole,
An understanding have, and boast a soul.

But brief the triumph; for I'm now brought lower
Than in the sphere I had adorned before.
Perfidious man—who, then, his arts will trust?—
Blackens my character, treads me in the dust

Yet I forgive, to him my soul devote,
And save him from all trials, near, remote,
From desert sands and winter's icy sleet.
Nothing my kindly purpose can defeat.

Answers to Puzzles in May Number.

I.

1. Boston.
2. New Haven.
3. Connecticut.
4. New York.
5. Brooklyn.
6. Philadelphia.
7. Cleveland.
8. Washington.
9. Detroit.
10. Chicago.
11. Baltimore.
12. Atlanta.
13. New Orleans.
14. Nashville.
15. San Francisco.
16. Limerick.
17. St. Petersburg.
18. Cairo.
19. London.
20. Athens.
21. Edinburgh.
22. Venice.
23. Milan.

II.

Charade.— Mend-i-cant.

III.

Numerical Enigma.

"Happiness grows at our own firesides, and is not to be picked in strangers' gardens."

THE CHEERFUL LETTER EXCHANGE.

OBJECTS.

1. To cheer and comfort the lonely and discouraged — not only invalids, but all who need cheer and comfort — by the interchange of letters and by gifts of books and periodicals.

2. To supply in some measure to young people in remote places the lack of schools, by gifts of school-books, letters, and, for those who desire it, correspondence classes on history, the natural sciences, and other interesting branches of study. If any desire to join such classes, they may send their names to our secretary.

3. Also to supply, to some extent, the lack of a church. One good sermon or sermon extract is printed in each number of the paper. These sermons are never doctrinal, but practical, and intended to cheer and comfort the sorrowful and aid in giving a vital religion without regard to sect or creed.

4. An important part of our mission is to mothers of young families, who feel the importance of their sacred charge and are anxious to learn all that can be known to make of their children good, upright, useful men and women,— good citizens of the country,— for which we must all work together if we would make it fulfil its mission among the nations of the world and to the races of mankind. We give books on subjects connected with the training of children, and our columns are open (in our "Mothers' Council") to all who have questions to ask or interesting suggestions to make on topics important to mothers.

TRAVELLING LIBRARIES.

The Travelling Libraries have now become an important part of Cheerful Letter work. In order that this department may be thoroughly organized and systematized, Miss Louise Brown, Box 91, South Framingham, Mass., has kindly consented to take it in charge. Will those interested in these libraries, and desiring information, kindly address Miss Brown as above ?

IMPORTANT NOTICES.

Those who send reading matter to the soldiers in the Philippine Islands, are reminded that *current* periodicals, and good, bright standard novels are the kind of reading desired. Do not send *old* magazines, nor periodicals adapted especially for women. Numbers of periodicals issued within a year may be sent.

Subscribers are asked to notice the change in our list of officers. Our treasurer, Miss Howe, after eleven years of most generous and faithful service, has resigned. In future, all subscriptions, and notices of renewal, discontinuance, and change of address may be sent to Mrs. Charles T. Catlin, 25 Beacon St., Boston, Mass. Checks should be made payable to Mary Louise Catlin.

N.B.—For your own convenience, dear friends, do not send these notices to the Editor. This may cause delay.

It is contrary to the rules of the Cheerful Letter Exchange to allow any one to make use of our paper by addressing letters, asking for money, clothing, or other articles, to those whose names are printed in the paper. This prohibition includes requests to borrow money and the offering of articles for sale. The name of any person who infringes this rule will be dropped from our list; and any one who receives a request of this description is desired by our Executive Committee to return no answer, but to enclose the letter at once to our secretary, Miss Langmaid.

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